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ABSTRACT

The college reading movement, its methods, organization, and, implicitly, the career opportunities within it, is critiqued in this report in terms of four categories of programs: (1) rapid reading with ancillary attention to study skills; (2) remedial type reading and study skills; (3) compensatory type programs; and (4) content area improvement of learning programs. The evolution of these programs over the past 30 years is discussed. Emphasis is on the most recent attempts to help improve learning in the content areas involving the supplemental or adjunct approach, the problem-solving approach to study skills, and the strategy of improving reading/writing/thinking by writing annotations. Contributions to the field of reading instruction made by college reading courses in the area of study skills and speed reading are noted as indications that college reading courses are generators of wisdom in the field of reading rather than copies of courses at the elementary or secondary school levels. (MKM)

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College Reading: Clone, Illegitimate Child, or Hybrid*

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Of the several questions and issues surrounding College Reading, one is central; Is "College Reading" a clone, that is, little more than an extension of basic reading instruction and practices; or is it an illegitimate child, in the sense of an illogical and convoluted extension of basic reading practices at the secondary level; or is it a hybrid, which is to say, a synthesis of conventional reading practices with other knowledge areas forming a new entity?

The time is growing near when this question may be answered definitively. A cook's tour of past, present and shaping practices in College Reading provides a basis for judgment. The road, as might be expected, must take into account historical topography. In the case of this discourse it runs relatively straight for a distance, then shows a bulge at the point requiring explanation and illustration of "shaping practices," and finally, a crook toward the end to accomodate a contemporary problem impacting on college reading, and potentially the field of reading as a whole.

College Reading: Past, Present, Future

Nearly everything which can be said about "College Reading" today was known and practiced by some in the past. Thus, much of what can be said to be "new" should more correctly be understood to be the growing popularization of ideas and practices deeply rooted in the past. This is to say, "College Reading"

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is not new, it has been gathering momentum for many years. It has not been until recently, however, that it has come firmly into place as an administrative entity.

The College Reading movement, its methods, organization and, implicitly, career opportunities within it, are critiqued here in terms of four categories, or levels, of programming: 1) Rapid Reading with Ancillary Attention to Study Skills; 2) Remedial Type Reading and Study Skills; 3) Compensatory Type Programming; and 4) Content Area Improvement of Learning Type Programming. These are discussed briefly in terms of their evolution over three generations of efforts.

Four Levels of Programming with Guiding Precepts

Level I: Rapid Reading Classes with Ancillary Attention to Study Skills

This form of college reading is the oldest and the most traditional. It has tended to involve a deliberate mix of attention to developmental readers who, it was believed, could profit from a speed reading course, ~~It also provided a~~ and a thinly veiled attempt to help some naughty, or otherwise slower, middle class, core culture, youngsters to "bone-up," as they used to say, for college life.

Level II: Remedial Type Reading and Study Skills

The remedial reading model came about as a direct result of the first influx into ~~the~~ college of the "Yahoos": namely, World War II and Korean "Conflict" veterans, and second/third generation white ethnics. These people came to the college situation with reading and writing deficits, but too, they were extremely ambitious; College was foreign to them, though not alien. Most all attempts to boost their reading, writing skills appeared, at first, to be relatively successful.

The bulk of programs designed to help these students were of a non-credit type, and tended to be unimaginative, in the sense of being little more than conventional college preparatory work offered on the college campus. In

retrospect, we now can see that these programs were not as successful as we first thought them to be. Records of attrition were not kept, and no one expected everyone to make-it. On the contrary, grading was on a "curve", and everyone had to take "ax' courses -- usually Advanced Algebra, Chemistry, and Rhetoric/Composition. These often were taught as if the intention was to cull-out the academically weak within the first year or two of college.

Level III: Compensatory Type Programming

In Level (or Phase) Three, the nation acquired a civil rights' conscience, and "compensatory-type" educational programs were founded. The idea was to bolster certain skills and abilities so as to compensate for others that were weak due to lack of previous social and educational opportunity.

This period, or level, of activity marked the beginning of many things. It would be impossible to characterize fully this period to anyone's, let alone to everyone's, satisfaction. Nonetheless, some ideas took firm root at this time which still hold considerable sway. These include ideas such as the following: 1) college curricula need not be restricted to the literature and history of the core culture; 2) minority group students appear to require continuous support from pre-freshman days through graduate school; 3) college credit is deemed appropriate for basic reading, writing, and mathematics; and 4) course requirements, methods, and materials should be adjusted so that nearly all can succeed. In short, the Colleges had come to believe that they had to change to accomodate the new students. Unfortunately, the students, in turn, seemed more than willing to relinquish personal responsibility for their own academic success to a seemingly guilt plagued academic elite.

Ironically, a previously intractible, and inflexible system, wavered and cracked: admissions standards were bent or waived, specific course requirements dropped, and a patchwork of laboratories, resource centers, and other such

notions came to substitute for, rather than to encourage, individual student efforts. Many of these new creations openly advertised that they would teach students how to "negotiate", or finesse their ways through college; few were willing to stress the idea of working to be equal to its requirements.

It appears that much of the impetus for these approaches came from two over-generalized reactions. The first, a loss of national pride and purpose which mounted with each day's news about a growingly unpopular, and seemingly unjustifiable war in Southeast Asia, and the second, the misbegotten belief that the effects of social/economic class distinctions could be ameliorated with a popularly supported, though ill conceived, "War on Poverty".

These, and related factors, galvanized the nation into a clash between the Core Culture and a Counter Culture. Voices holding to more moderate positions could not be heard above the din of raucous charges and counter charges. Nonetheless, some important work continued, albeit unrecognized. This work has provided the basis for much of today's efforts and advances.

Level IV: Content Area Improvement of Learning Type Programming

In this current period several exciting and rational developments appear to be taking shape. This requires considerable explanation, and therefore constitutes the bulge in the road alluded to above.

Foremostly, College Reading now is better understood to be a general "Improvement of Learning" movement[1]. As such, it appears to be a hybrid, selectively bred from educational research and development efforts which can be recognized by such code names as: affective education, behavioral engineering, inquiry training, staff development and differentiation, humanistic psychology, content area reading, social/imitation learning theory, and our own entree, the LICA Design. . .a call name for the "Languaging in the Content Areas" thesis,

[1]The term Improvement of Learning is borrowed from the Reading Center at Syracuse University where it has been the title for their college reading efforts for at least twenty years.

an emerging concept attempting to bring a sense of unity and purpose to post-elementary reading, language and thinking improvement (Manzo and Sherk, 1979).

The scope of the current effort includes the needs of core culture students, the white and black ethnic, the urban and ex-urban student, and a range which includes pre-college to graduate level programming in medicine, law, dentistry, pharmacy, and soon, we hope, in Education. It involves working directly with students on a credit and non-credit basis, and with faculty.

The means and methods are quite sophisticated and are fachioned, as suggested above, to several complex precepts, rather than to a single theory of learning, such as characterized the previous twenty year emphasis almost exclusively on "reinforcement learning".

To symbolize these efforts in concrete terms three educative strategies emanating from experiences at my own institution are discussed. These include the "Supplemental", PASS, and REAP. The full story would have to be collected from several others, most notably, Alton Raygor and David Wark at the University of Minnesota, Frank Christ and Margaret Coda-Messerle at the California State University at Long Beach, and Martna Maxwell at the University of California at Berkley, among others.

The Supplemental

The "supplemental" has been synthesized from the precepts of the "Languaging in the Content Areas" design mentioned above, and the particular interpretation of it arises out of the day-to-day work of Dr. Deanna Martin, and her associates at the Student Learning Center (SLC) of the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

A "supplemental" essentially is a series of meetings between a Learning Skills Specialist and students in a given course. The Learning Skills Specialist typically has a strong background in the given discipline, and special "in-house" staff training. The Specialist usually has taken, or simultaneously is auditing,

a course alongside normally enrolled students. This is the setting in which the Specialist works.

The Learning Skills Specialist meets students before or after class or in other scheduled sessions once or twice per week. Student attendance is voluntary and fluctuates between 30-60% of the number enrolled in the course.

The most basic thing that happens in a supplemental is that the Learning Skills Specialist bides his time awaiting that "teachable moment" wherein he can demonstrate how he has learned -- or processed -- the course content, including how he has taken notes in class and upon required readings. The emphasis of the supplemental always is on content. Skills are taught primarily in an incidental way. The Learning Skills Specialist models many of these as he "languages-through" his own complex thoughts, notes, and questions on the material read.

Explicit skills instruction is avoided in the early stages for it often has the same impact as such pearls of wisdom as one might hear from a securities' analyst: "The key to profit is to buy low and sell high"; or the inclination of the academically talented to make up sheer nonsense to explain their success. The latter being comparable to when a very old person is asked to tell the secret of his longevity and he answers with something like, "Curdled milk"!

Typically, a supplemental session looks more like the following: the Learning Skills Specialist says to the class "What did you find to be the key concepts or questions and terminology in the previous reading assignment?" During the "languaging" interaction which follows, the Learning Skills Specialist might show his notes to the class. Someone "keys-in" on the organization of the notes and asks, "How did you do that?" That is the teachable moment. The Specialist then teaches the fundamentals of say, the BFAR notetaking method (McKowen, 1979) while maintaining close attention to the content. . . the student's foremost concern.

PASS: or the 5 C's

The second strategy is a variation on the Supplemental. It was developed more particularly for use in a skills centered course, such as our Developmental Reading 100 (2 credits). It is called PASS (Manzo and Casale, in press), a Problem-solving Approach to Study Skills. PASS, too, was fashioned from the LICA Design. A critique of the rationale and the method tell, by inference, about several of the more fundamental precepts of the design.

A Problem-solving Approach to Study Skills

The avowed purpose of this strategy to improve "Study Skills" is to inculcate an attitude and a determination that life is a series of problems which generally are manageable, and often solveable.

A set of guidelines are followed which simultaneously aids the student to meet various reading/learning/study needs while internalizing the fundamentals of problem-solving. There are two critical features of this approach. For one, an oral language/thinking interaction occurs between the teacher and the class in which the teacher, in the role of facilitator and resource person, serves as a model of effective language and problem-solving behaviors. Second, students join with the teacher in the common cause of diagnosing and dealing appropriately with their personal learning needs. This approach tends to reduce much of the dependency and child-like behavior students often exhibit when involved in more traditional basic skills instruction.

Five C's code our rendition of a problem-solving approach to study skills. The teacher may wish to employ other problem-solving approaches which he/she finds more compatible with his/her thinking and style.

The 5 C's

COUNT: A list of common study skills is presented to students. They are asked to indicate their judgments as to the severity of each as a problem to them.

CHARACTERIZE: Once problems have been identified, the teacher/convener guides students in defining the problem, and themselves, as well, in specific terms. (In this step, the teacher urges the student to take diagnostic tests of his skills, abilities, attitudes, and such, and thereby reach a firmer sense of himself as a learner.)

CONSIDER: Next, students are led to consider how they intuitively have dealt with a particular problem, and whether there is merit in such intuitive means for coping.

COLLECT: At this point, standard techniques related to the particular reading/study problem are discussed and judged on the basis of whether they are compatible with the student's characteristic patterns of behavior and temperament. If these appear difficult and incompatible to the point of being warping, the procedures are dismissed as inappropriate.

CREATE: Where standard procedures appear to be inappropriate and continuing poor performance cannot be tolerated, inventive alternatives are sought from the refined information on the student and his problem.

REAP: To Improve Reading/Writing/Thinking

Central to the REAP strategy is having students learn to write specially tailored annotations. In writing such annotations, the reader is required to discriminate and synthesize the ideas presented, translate these into his own terms, and then to compare his annotation with others and/or discuss his deliberations with the teacher and the class.

The effect is a stepwise graduation from literal level to higher order critical thinking. The comparison step can be with annotations prepared by the teacher or other teachers and specialists in the field represented by the reading selection (see: Eanet and Manzo, 1976 for further explanation and illustration).

This method has proven to be especially powerful with very bright students with suboptimal skills. The comparison and discussion steps are extremely incisive in pointing up cognitive deficits, and just plain "sloppy thinking".

Conclusions

College Reading has never been a clone, it always has had its own experience and history. It has, at times, appeared an illegitimate child; though not of

elementary or secondary reading, but of Freshman English. Recently, College Reading seems to have emerged as a hybrid, or more, perhaps, a thoroughbred capable of siring quality developments in elementary and secondary school practices.

Evidence for this last point has been present for some time, though little noted. Francis Robinson's SQ3R (1961), for example, was conceived in the context of the college, though now is in wide use in secondary schools. REAP, PASS and the Supplemental have the motility to bridge to the secondary schools, and have begun to do so.

One might even speculate that secondary reading is the product of developments at the elementary and the college levels, and therefore, it is the "new kid" on the block. Surely in the realm of study skills, and indisputibly in "speed reading", the college context has been the more prolific contributor.

In short, it appears that our initial question, and the readers' acceptance of it, demonstrates the irony that College Reading, far from being clone, illegitimate child, or even hybrid, is more properly understood as a parent and guardian; a generator, and a repository of considerable wisdom.

The Crook in the Road

It is hoped that this tour of College Reading both would prove to be of some academic value, and of some value to the Academy. Serious monetary cutbacks and heavy emphasis on "student-credit-hour-production" are threatening to devastate College Reading programs nationwide. Such programs often are among the first to be cut because they do not appear to be competitive with seemingly more academically rigorous and productive units.

It is hoped that a fuller realization of the past and continuing contributions made possible due to the existence of College Reading programs will not go unrecognized.

College reading programs provide at least two important features to the University. It is through such programs that the college franchise is extended to many otherwise disenfranchized, culturally and educationally deprived, Americans. And, too, College Reading programs have, and continue to serve as a vital and accessible, in-house laboratory for creative research and development efforts.

A careful perusal of the significant research in education shows a disproportionately large share was made possible due to the professionals and students associated with College Reading; . . .it is the garage in which the irreverent continue to tinker with an ingenuity often reaching beyond the boundaries of "funded" research.

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